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ABSTRACT

This program, included in "Effective Reading Programs...," serves 879 first- and second-graders, plus one fourth-grade class. The students are predominantly middle-class whites living in a small city. The program is an initial reading program designed to complement any basal reading series. The instructional strategy is based on the premise that the children will best learn to read with materials that are meaningful to them and employ their own vocabulary and syntax. The program encourages students to tape-record many stories or experiences that are important to them. Typed copies are returned to the children and put into their folders, which then become personalized readers. When the children receive their typed stories, they may choose to share them with their teacher or their peers, or simply to read them to themsleves. Sometimes a small group of the entire class uses the blackboard to describe a special class activity; this helps students to build sentences and talk about a main idea. Another strategy encouraging self-expression is a daily journal. Read-aloud literature is often used to foster appreciation of books and to stimulate children to create stories on their own. The program is designed to prevent reading problems that might require later remediation. (WA)

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INVITE YOUR STUDENTS TO TALK

THEIR WAY TO BETTER READING!

CSTA fosters affirmative attitudes toward reading through the crucial primary grades. Based on the premise that children will best learn to read what is meaningful to them personally, the program invites children to spontaneously cassette record their thoughts, stories or impressions. These recorded impressions are composed in the privacy of a simply constructed booth located in each classroom.

Upon completing his tape, the student symbolically mails it to a typist aide who visits his room one or more times daily to pick up the "mail." She types each child's orally recorded material, using primer type, and returns it within a day to be placed in individual folders which become the children's "personalized readers."

Used in a variety of instructional ways, the typed material composed from each child's vocabulary and syntax, leads to greater peer knowledge and abundant opportunities for the teacher to get to know her pupils better. Other benefits include enhanced self images of the children and greater productivity of the pupils.

Over 90% of the second graders can read all they dictate by the end of grade two. When one recalls the extensive speaking vocabulary which forms the basis of the printed material, this feat is better appreciated.

The CSTA program is a prevention, not a remediation or cure program. It leads to a spontaneous desire to read on the part of the child by the end of grade two, and brings about a total orchestration of the language arts activities of thinking, speaking, listening and reading.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH AUTHORSHIP

A Project Under Title III, ESEA

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CS001 921

AN INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPING PRIMARY COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Communication Skills Through Authorship (CSTA) is a complementary initial and early reading program. Sylvia Ashton-Warner's "key vocabulary" as discussed in Teacher, and the language experience approach to reading provided the impetus for the development of CSTA. Ashton-Warner used her method primarily as a bridge to conventional basals. The other humanistic and developmental approach to early reading, the language experience approach, is limited by two factors. The first is the burdensome amount of time it takes a teacher to hand-record live dictation from her children. The second limitation is the dependency upon an ideal pupil-teacher interaction at each moment of dictation, so that the child will not feel hurried or constrained in what he says.

CSTA was designed to preserve the strengths and alleviate the weaknesses of these approaches. In CSTA the first or second grade child may step into a simply-constructed, cardboard recording environment housed in the classroom, place his cassette tape in the recorder and orally dictate his story, impression or experience in the privacy of the environment. When finished, he "mails" his tape to a project typist who gathers tapes one or more times daily. She types his dictated narration using primer type and returns it to him with his tape, usually within one day. In Lewiston, the foremost developmental field site, CSTA has been used with a synthetic phonics basal, and Lewis Smith, the originator, believes CSTA may be valuable as a complement to any basal.

Pilot studies were conducted in Lewiston for two years in four classrooms and showed significant gains (.05 and .01 levels) for the experimental group on Stanford Achievement reading-related subtests. The most impressive result following the pilot years, conducted at McSorley under Principal Roger Adams, was that all second graders were able to read <u>everything</u> they had dictated. Another outgrowth of the pilot program was that as the participants became third graders they evidenced higher interest in reading trade and library books and produced more creative writing than the teachers had before experienced.

On the basis of the pilot findings, a Title III, ESEA grant, written by Dr. Smith and the school district, was obtained for the 1971-72 school year and CSTA was tried in forty-five classrooms. The participants were twelve-hundred students from first through third grades, remedial reading classes, and several Special Education classes in Lewiston Independent School District No. One, Lapwai District No. 341 (including forth percent Nex Perce Indian children), and St. Stanislaus Parochial School in Lewiston. Lewiston is a middle socio-economic community where the main industries are lumber processing, grain handling, cattle raising and marketing. Over 23,000 tapes were made by the children during that school year. At the close of the second funded year, 1972-73, approximately the same number of children participated and 26,000 taped stories were produced. A teacher survey conducted at the close of the 1971-72 year found that about 95% of second graders could read all they had dictated. This is an impressive feat when one recalls the oral vocabulary range of a second grader, and remembers the complexity and naturalness of his speech.

Many reading authorities have long been perplexed by the mundane character and strangeness to the child of the form and content of early reading materials. CSTA answers this concern and extends the benefits of the language experience approach to reading by (1) relieving the teacher of the need to take dictation by hand; (2) making the child's reading material conform closely to his natural form of speaking; and (3) by not requiring the young child to have perfected the difficult skills of writing or printing all his own thoughts.

Under Dr. Smith's direction the University of Idaho is continuing to develop training materials and experiences for teachers and teacher-trainees interested in employing this teaching strategy.

CSTA utilizes several strategies including variations of Warner's key vocabulary, sustained silent reading, daily journals, frequent use of selected read-aloud literature, and private recording booths with cassette tapes issued to each student. Students are encouraged to record whenever they have a story or experience they wish to dictate. After the typed copy is returned to them they either have it read to them, or they read to a listener.

The short selections or excerpts included below are evidence that children's natural creative ability is released through oral dictation. Evaluation of these dictations is restricted to verbal or written praise tendered by the teacher. Kathy (second grade), created a dialogue with the wind in her story:

Come Play with Me

"Wind, come play with me," said Billy. But the wind just sat. He didn't want to fly Billy's paper airplane.

"Will you at least blow my face?" asked Billy.

"No," said the wind.

Then he asked the wind if he wanted to fly my kite.

And the wind answered, "Yes," before he was finished talking.

And they played that day with the kite and they were friends.

. . . .

Jim (first grade), tells about a wish many of us had as a child:

These people were looking for a giant glass of chocolate milk.

And they found a golden ladder, so they climbed up it. And then they saw a lake, so they jumped in it. And it was the glass of chocolate milk. And finally they sipped it all up. And then they made a ladder to get out.

Then they felt real good because they had a whole bunch of chocolate milk in them.

That's all I have to say.

. . . .

Susie (first grade):

I have a little cat and he goes under, he crawls at my mommy's bed. He goes under the covers and bites my daddy's toes and my mommy's toes. Then he comes every room and he sees people and he bites every toe in the house.

. . . .

Greg (first grade):

When I grow up, I want to be a policeman. I always watch "Adam 12" every night and I like "The F.B.I." too.

Over and out.

. . . .

Lisa (second grade) dictated a tender, moving story about a horse and its baby. The baby, Starlight, was curious about fences, halters, and

saddle. One day he wondered what people were, and his mother said they were human beings.

"What are human beings?" said Starlight.

"They're people who talk...animals, like we are."

"We're animals? That's curious to me. I thought we were human beings."

"Well, we aren't." .....

Well, it was night and he wanted to go out. And she said, "No, it's time for you to sleep." And she sang the horses' lullaby.

Sleep, little horse,
Sleep, little horse,
My love...
We will be near you,
Night and day.
La, la, la, lou,
La, la, la, lou...

In the morning he woke. He always pretended he was still asleep but his mother knew.

She cleaned him with a nice warm tongue....

. . . .

Janis, a special education student, talks to Homer, the name given to the cassette recorder by her class. The environment in which Homer is placed is made to look like an igloo and is affectionately known as "Sam." In her six page story Janis talks with Homer and Sam about the seasons and we join her as she begins to describe summer. Her gratitude and friendship for Homer and Sam are revealed in the closing of her story:

"Yes, Homer, summer. Okay, we'll talk about summer.

"Summer is the time when it gets hot. All the trees are in bloom and all the flowers are in bloom too. And all the birds are singing and the children are going swimming and it is vacation time too. The time to get out of school, but we won't talk about that until summer comes, okay? But you know, Homer and Sam,

we will be getting out of school June 2. But that will be a really, really, really long time. Just lots of months. So I still have all those months to talk to you again, Homer and Sam. You guys have really been good friends. I really like both you guys. You guys have been one of my best friends. But let's don't talk about that anymore. Okay, Homer and Sam?

"Oh, are you guys still crying from that? Listen, you guys. I've got January, February, March, April, May, and June. That is another six months. So you guys don't cry. I'll get to talk to you all the time until school is out.

"Well, Homer and Sam, guess I better go now. Goodbye. Be good."

. . . .

Vivid impressions from a summer vacation trip were recorded by Cheri (second grade), unedited excerpts of which appear here. Imagine the discussion that could be elicited by the skillful teacher based on the second paragraph:

I went down the slide there, headfirst and that was about five feet deep and I'm not that big, but I managed. I didn't drown. I just swam over. If I couldn't swim over, I had to get up on the very tippy toes and walk over.

Then from Sacramento we went to San Francisco. You wouldn't like it there. You can't go swimming. They don't have yards. They have a whole mess of skyscrapers, no yards, they're not very big. It's about twenty feet from one side to the other side. You can't play baseball or anything because there just isn't enough room.

. . . .

Selected excerpts from a small sampling of teachers' remarks reveal their early reactions to the CSTA program:

Mrs. Ankney (first grade) - "I am excited by the interest and response I'm getting from the children. I'm excited by the stories these tape recorders and key words are unlocking in the children."

. . . .

Mrs. Courtney (EMR) - "One of the greatest assets of CSTA to me is that it is or can be truly ungraded and unlabeled. My children come together to share stories written in their journals whenever

about 5 or 6 of them are ready, and it doesn't matter at all which children come. Each can feel important....Compare this with an experience such as reading from the same level Weekly Reader or directions from a math book. Immediately success or failure is evident to everyone taking part."

. . . .

Mrs. Crouse (second grade)-"...this program seems to maintain and increase interest on its own. Even when a child's ability to perform seems less than others, he is anxious to make his contribution. The benefits to the teacher are becoming more and more apparent....
There is more understanding and communication between pupil and teacher because of the knowledge that has been willingly volunteered.... This in itself would make the program invaluable."

Mrs. Day (second grade)-"I am enchanted after seeing the expression on a child's face when he reads his typed story. Each time one is returned he goes into his own world to peek at his personal creation."

Miss Epling (first grade)-"It helps her form a closer association with her students, letting her feel she's teaching individual children, not textbooks. Having new materials to work with every day makes education fun and exciting."

All teachers felt they knew their students better as a result of conducting CSTA in their classrooms. Most believed they knew the majority of students better than they had in any previous year because of the abundance of sharing that goes on through CSTA activities.

Effective in-service training of classroom teachers and principals in whose buildings CSTA is to take place is a vital prerequisite to the success of the program. An inventory (San Diego County Inventory of Reading Attitude), administered following in-service training and CSTA experience, revealed that both staff and principals significantly increased in their preference for the language experience approach and individualized reading, and declined in their preference for using the basal program alone.

An evaluation form asking about the CSTA program was sent to all parents

of participating students at the close of the first year the program was used throughout the district. Forms were returned by 758 parents and revealed that most children (686) had expressed pleasure in the taping opportunity; most children (622) seemed more interested in reading; most of the parents (716) felt that CSTA was a worthwhile complement to the basal reading series; and most were strongly supportive (441), or casually supportive (179) of the program. Parents were invited to write comments on the questionnaire. There were 455 written responses; 439 were positive or highly favorable.

Selection as a Right to Read "Expansion Site" in 1972 permitted expanding individualized reading in grades four through eight. Hundreds of paperback books were placed in most classrooms of grades one through eight. Teachers were trained in administering individualized reading programs, conferencing, record keeping, and skills instruction. Continuing evaluation of the CSTA and Right to Read programs is in progress.

CSTA enhances children's self-images and in some instances has released inhibited learners back into the mainstream of the academic work of their classroom. CSTA is also highly compatible with the views of those reading authorities who suggest that:

--for children to form thoughts into speech contributes to their maturational processes;

--to silence children's voices is to silence their minds; and

--that it is difficult, if not impossible, to produce successful, spontaneous readers from those children who have inadequate abilities in verbal expression.

Some stories dictated by children have possessed such high interest that they have been illustrated and reproduced on the school's offset press.

Small numbers of them have been supplied to all CSTA classrooms to take their place with the more widely used classics in children's literature.

For those who believe that children should feel that reading is a pleasant or a preferred activity, CSTA has much to offer. It is a program that fosters and preserves this good feeling for reading; it is not a remedial reading program. We have found that by the close of second grade, children in CSTA classrooms are eager to read trade and library books. They have beggn a love for books that should-with encouragement in future classrooms-last a lifetime.

Professional Journal Articles on the Pilot Years, 1969-1971:

Smith, Lewis and Willardson, Marlyn. "Communication Skills Through Authorship," Elementary English, Vol. XLVIII, Febuary, 1971, pp. 190-192.

Smith, Lewis; Adams, Roger: Schomer, Joe; and Willardson, Marlyn. "Communication Skills Through Self-Recording," Today's Education, January, 1971, pp. 33-38

"The 'Write' Road to Reading," Reading Newsreport, Vol. V, No. 5, March, 1971.

Professional Journal Articles on Title III, ESEA Funded Years, 1971-74:

Smith, Lewis B. "CSTA: An Individualized Program for Primary Communication Skills," Alberta English, Fall, 1973, pp. 10-17.

Smith, Lewis B. and Morgan, Glen D. "Cassette Tape Recording as a Primary Method in the Development of Early Reading Material," Elementary English, April 1975

Smith, Lewis B. and Adams, Roger W. "An Individualized Program for Developing Primary Communication Skills," The Instructor, 1974 November.

THE SECOND AND THIRD GOVERNMENT FUNDED YEARS

Teacher interest in participating in CSTA increased in both the second and third government funded years as measured by survey forms. Principals kept logs of their efforts to encourage staff in CSTA activities. Their efforts became increasingly important as project co-directors assumed a lower leadership profile, in anticipation of termination of government funding.

Parent evaluation of the project showed increasing uppport each year. At the close of the third government funded year, 643 questionnaires out of 651 expressed a preference for continuation of the project.

At the close of the third government funded year, the 367 students in grade one who might have been expected to achieve 1.9 on the Stanford Achievement Test earned mean scores of 2.19 in WM, 2.05 in PM, 2.37 in V, and 2.49 in WS.

Second graders numbering 351, who might have been expected to achieve means of 2.9 at the time of testing actually achieved 3.22 in WM, 3.11 in PM, and 3.99 in WS. Achievement expectation levels were predicated upon group IW tests indicating average ability.

Another objective in the final year sought to have 80% of the third grade students to have read 30 or more trade and library books by February of their third grade year. Seventy-eight percent had read 15 or more such books in the first five months of their third grade year and conferenced in 3 or more of them. Since library and trade books had also been read in grade two, the objective was well met.

During the final government funded year, almost 27,000 dictations were tape-recorded by students in the project. Also, through the state's visitation program, several districts visited and then adopted portions of, or the complete program. The Idaho State Department nominated, and the Right to Read

Office chose lewiston as a school-based expansion site. R2R funds were used to train staff and to purchase a great variety and number of paperbacks for individualized reading in intermediate grades.

Meanwhile, the Lewiston District is continuing the program with local funds from its regular operating budget. The University and Distrcit have established a partnership whereby teacher trainees take a three credit class in the CSTA teaching strategies and a two credit clinical field experience in which they employ the techniques they have learned under teacher supervision. In this way both institutions contribute to the further development of a promising and humanistic approach to the teaching of reading.

THEY FOUND A GOLDEN LADDER. . .

Lewis B. Smith

Walter Loban in a Distinguished Lecture Series of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), entitled "Green Pastures in Elementary English," distinguishes between adventurous and timid teachers. He suggests that adventurous teachers must be involved in students' emotions and attitudes. This involves the sharing of deep feelings, permitting differing opinions to be expressed and varied thinking processes used. A prerequisite would seem to be that instructional materials permit or invite differing opinions to be expressed and varied thinking processes to be used, for instructional materials that permit or invite differing interpretations and opinions. Materials read to and by elementary pupils need to have content which attracts and engages the mind, not pallid, or placid, or dun colored stuff. Once the mind is engaged, discussion can soon follow. Before we read to, or select reading material for children, we should probably ask, "is it worth the reading in the first place?"

Discussion and pupil talk need to occur. As Loban eloquently puts it, ". . . to silence the child's tongue is to silence his mind." This has implications for all our classroom practices, but especially for reading. He asserts that it is impossible to build a successful program of reading on an inadequate base of speaking and listening. In our eagerness to teach reading, we have forgotten how important listening and speaking are. Research done on 300 children for 13 years which Loban cites suggests

that, children who did not have real power with the spoken word, or could not listen easily, never did learn to read or write well.

Findings such as these undoubtedly prompt the authors of popular present day teacher-training methods to urge that we better perfect our abilities as teachers to encourage small group and one-to-one discussion.

The pre-school and early school child needs a stimulating and opportunity-filled environment for the cultivation of his intellect and for the full development of his verbal capacity. Schools especially in the early years, ought to be places where children do far more talking than the teacher (1). This would suggest that elementary school classes must not be places of eerie silence (2), as they are in some buildings. It is time we begin to realize the learning opportunities we overlook or fail to fully develop through our ignorance and lack of training!

Imagine how our early school classes would be transformed if as much attention were methodically and regularly given to peer discussion in small groups as is given to the teaching of traditional reading (3). Informal conversation groups would be encouraged especially in the early grades (4). This would tend to give recognition to the realization that a person is often at his creative peak when a child (5). Students would be prompted to wants to. And, it preserves the child's vocabulary and syntax so that much of his initial and early learning-to-read material can conform most closely to his own natural language, a recommendation mad by numerous reading and language arts authorities.

This process is called "Communication Skills Through Authorship, or CSTA (10). After a two year pilot program, the project was funded by Title III funds for a three year period, and attracted modest Right-to-Read support also (11). Since the expiration of the government-funded period,

the Lewiston, Idaho, local district has assumed the costs and has continued the program.

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Upon hearing his tape, the student symbolically mails it to a typist aide who visits his room one or more times daily to pick up the "mail." She types each child's orally recorded materials, using primer type, and returns it within a day to be placed in individual folders which become the children's "personalized readers."

Used in a variety of instructional ways, the typed material composed from each child's vocabulary and syntax, leads to greater peer knowledge and abundant opportunities for the teacher to get to know her pupils better. Other benefits believed to accrue include enhanced self-images of the children and greater creative productivity of the pupils.

Over 95% of the second graders can read all they dictate by the end of grade two. When one recalls the extensive speaking vocabulary which forms the basis of the printed material, and the fact that these children are of average I.Q., this feat is better appreciated.

The CSTA program is a prevention, not a remediation or cure program. It leads to a spontaneous desire to read on the part of the child by the end of grade two, and can bring about a total orchestration of the language arts activities of thinking, speaking, listening and reading.

This project was originated by Dr. Lewis Smith, University of Idaho,

and was developed jointly by the University and the Lewiston Idaho, Idaho School District. Through cooperative efforts the project now produces about 25-27,000 taped dictations per year from less than one thousand first and second graders. Seven typist aides are currently employed for seven building. Most work six to seven hours a day after the school year gets underway. A synthetic phonics basal program in use before the inception of the project, continues in use today (12). CSTA is a complementary program used by all first and second grade teachers.

On the occasion of the last government-funded testing year (Spring, 1974) 367 first graders who might have been expected to achieve 1.9 on the Stanford Achievement earned mean scores of 2.19 in Word Meaning, 2.05 in Paragraph Meaning, 2.37 in vocabulary and 2.49 in Word Study. Second graders numbering 351, who might have been expected to achieve means of 2.9 at the time of testing actually achieved 3.22 in Word Meaning, 3.11 in Paragraph Meaning and 3.99 in Word Study (13). Group intelligence test score means have consistently ranged between 100 and 102 for children in the district.

As important as any of the foregoing, is the spontaneous desire for children to tape and then to be read to, or to read their returned stories. Upper graders often come in to serve as readers or listener-helpers. Special stories are often bound and placed on the check-out shelf.

Some selected samples of the children's stories appear below.*

* * * *

Jim, (first grade) tells about a wish many of us had as a child:

These people were looking for a giant glass of chocolate milk.

They found a golden ladder, so they climbed up it. Then they saw a lake, so they jumped in it. And it was the glass of chocolate milk. Finally they sipped it all up. Then they made a ladder to get out.

Then they felt good because they had a whole bunch of

chocolate milk in them.

That's all I have to say.

* * * *

Greg (first grade)

When I grow up, I want to be a policeman. I always watch "Adam-12" every night and I like "The F.B.I." too.

Over and out.

* * * *

*Reprinted with permission of the author and Alberta English, Fall, 1972.

Kathy (second grade), created a dialogue with the wind in her story:

Come Play With Me

"Wind, come play with me," said Billy. But the wind just sat. He didn't want to fly Billy's paper airplane.

"No," said the wind.

Then he asked the wind if he wanted to fly my kite.

And the wind answered, "Yes," before he was finished talking.

And they played that day with the kite and they were friends.

* * * *

Lisa (second grade), dictated a tender, moving story about a horse and its baby. The baby, Starlight, was curious about fences, halters, and saddles. One day he wondered what people were, and his mother said they were human beings.

"What are human beings?" said Starlight.

"They're people who talk. . .animals, like we are."

"We're animals? That's curious to me. I thought we were human beings."

"Well, we aren't."

Well, it was night and he wanted to go out. And she

said, "No, it's time for you to sleep." And she sang the horses' lullaby.

Sleep, little horse,
Sleep, little horse,
My love...
We will be near you,
Night and day.
La, la, la, lou
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In the morning he woke. He always pretended he was still asleep but his mother knew.

She cleaned him with a nice warm tongue.

* * * *

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"Yes, Homer, summer. Okay, we'll talk about summer.

"Summer is the time when it gets hot. All the trees are in bloom and all the flowers are in bloom too. And all the birds are signing and the children are going swimming and it is vacation time too. The time to get out of school, but we won't talk about that until summer comes, okay? But you know, Homer and Sam, we will be getting out of school June 2. But that will be a really, really, really long time. Just lots of months. So I still have all those months to talk to you again, Homer and Sam. You guys have really been good friends. I really like both you guys. You guys have been one of my best friends. But let's don't talk about that anymore. Okay, Homer and Sam?

"Oh, are you guys still crying from that? Listen, you guys. I've got January, February, March, April, May and June. That is another six months. So you guys don't cry. I'll get to talk to you all the time until school is out.

"Well, Homer and Sam, guess I better go now. Goodbye. Be good."

Vivid impressions from a summer vacation trip were recorded by Cheri (second grade), unedited excerpts of which appear here. Imagine the discussion that could be elicited by the skillful teacher based on the second paragraph:

> "I went down the slide there, headfirst and that was about five feet deep and I'm not that big, but I managed. I didn't drown. I just swam over. If I couldn't swim over, I had to get up on the very tip of my tippy toes and walk over.
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> "Then from Sacramento we went to San Francisco. You wouldn't like it there. You can't go swimming. They don't have yards. They have a whole mess of skyscrapers, no yards, they're not very big. It's about twenty feet from one side to the other side. You can't play baseball or anything because there just isn't enough room."

The success of the children in the project is directly proportional to the belief and support of their teacher and her administrator. Some teachers flourish with CSTA, other are somewhat reluctant to employ the complement fully. Some teachers practice most or all of the twenty or more supporting strategies in CSTA. Others avoid those they feel least confident about.

For those who believe that children should feel that reading is a pleasant or a preferred activity, CSTA has much to offer. It is a program that fosters and preserves this good feeling for reading; it is not a remedial reading program. We have found that by the close of second grade, children in CSTA classrooms are eager to read trade and library books. They have begun a love for books that should--with encouragement in future classrooms--last a lifetime.

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